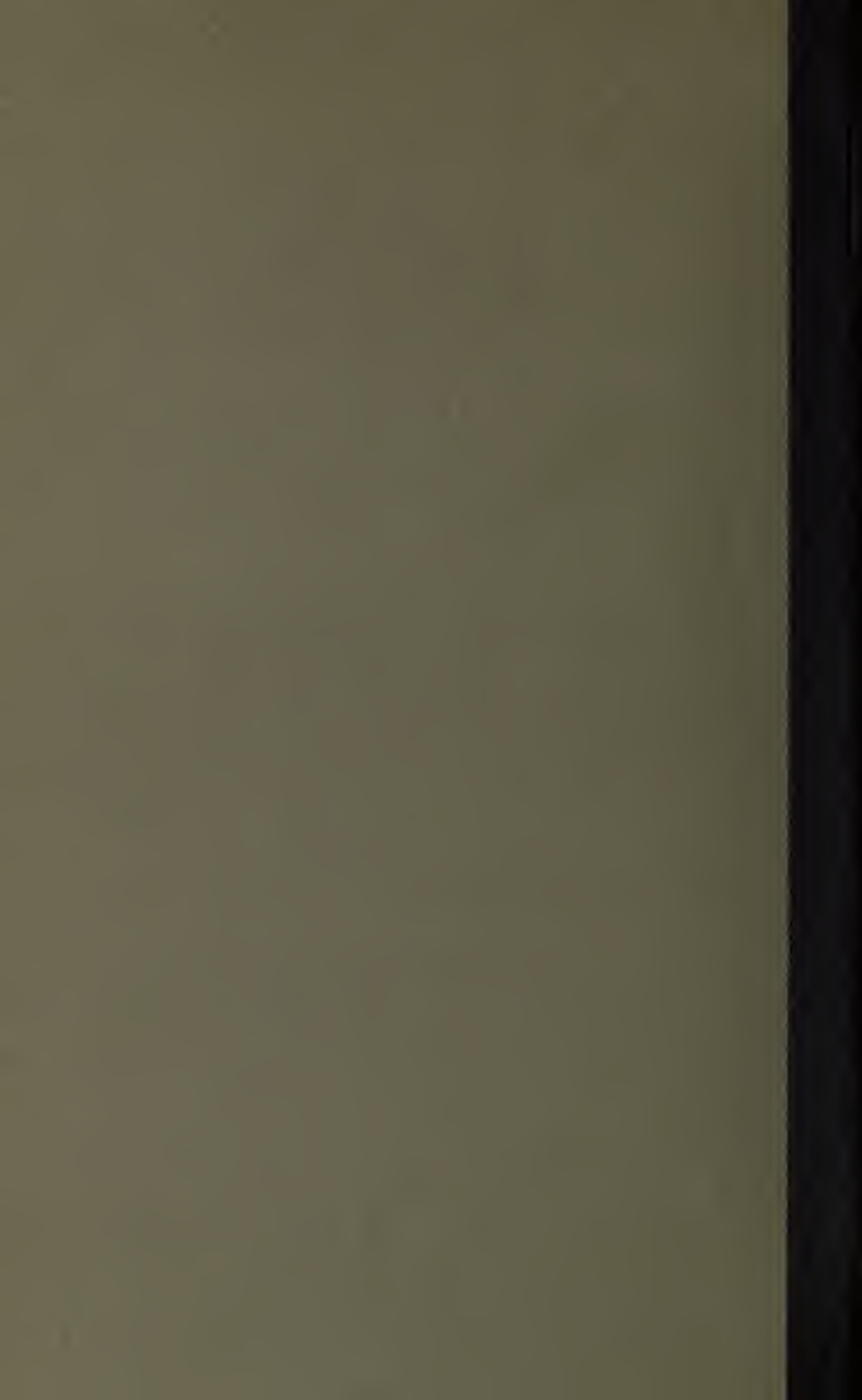


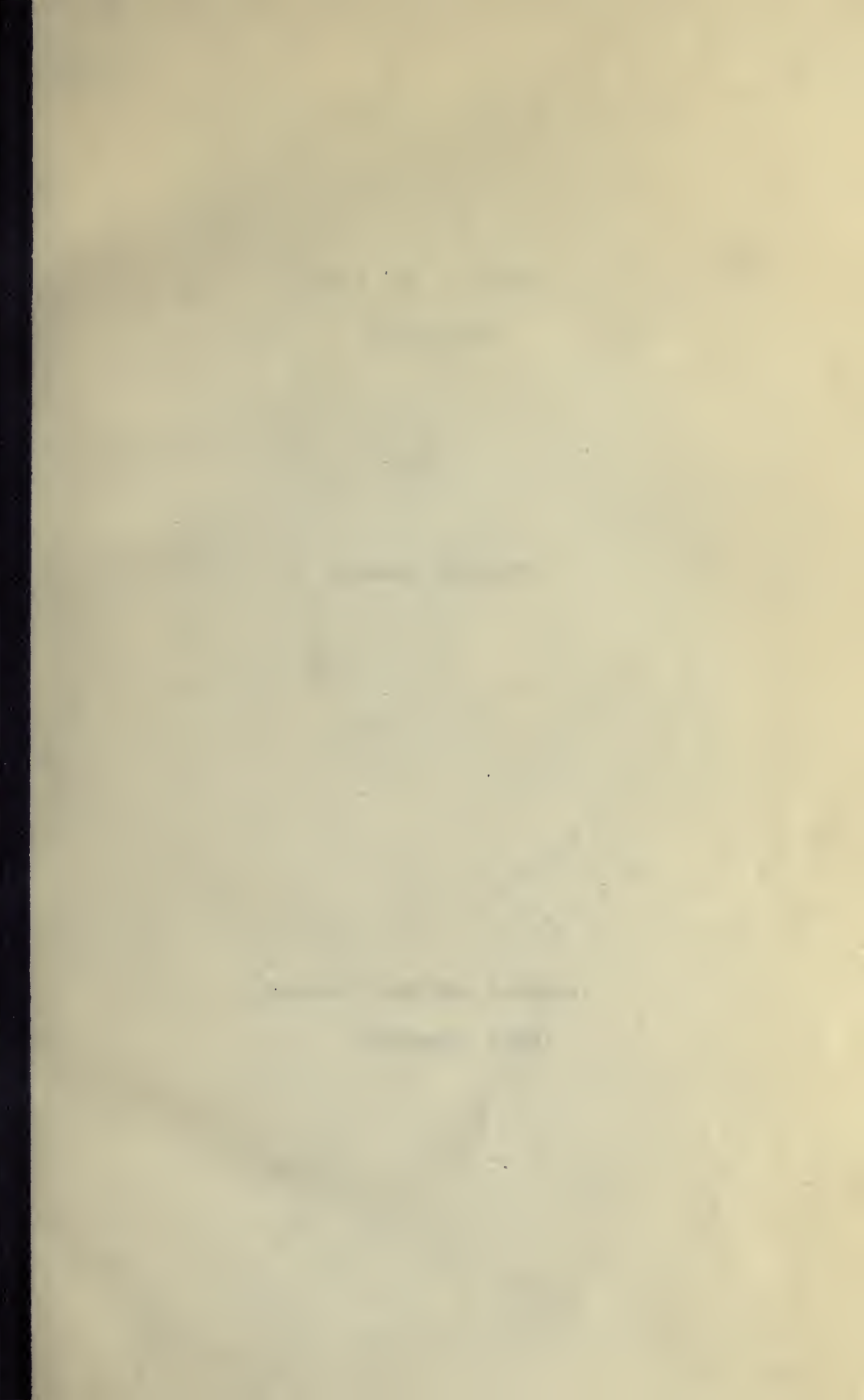
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[Matthews, Brander]

Notes on Parisian newspapers.





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NOTES ON PARISIAN

NEWSPAPERS

by

Brander Matthews

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[Excerpt from the Century,

December, 1887]



IN THE HALL.

At the smile and the words hope sprang up his arms, trembling, frightened at his tenderness in Vernaff's heart. In an instant she was in violence, but unresisting.

J. G. Perkins.

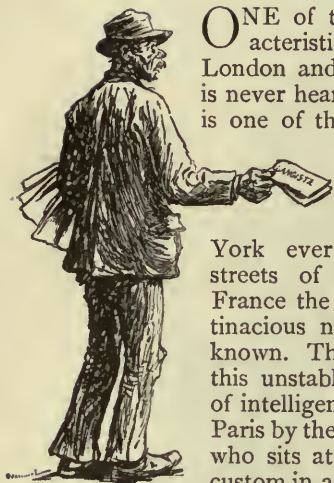
THE HOUR-GLASS.

TIME is no rushing torrent, dark and hoarse,
As thou hast heard from bards and sages old;
Sit here with me (wouldst thou the truth behold)
And watch the current hour run out its course.
See how without uproar or sullen force
Glides the slim, shadowy rill of atom gold,
Which, when the last slow, guileful grain is told,
Forever is returned unto its source!
This is Time's stream, by whose repeated fall
Unnumbered fond ones, since the world was new,
Loitered as we, unwarned of doom the while:
Wouldst think so slender stream could cover all?
But as we speak, some eddy draws us too.—
Meseems dim grow thine eyes and dim thy smile.

Edith M. Thomas.

[Matthew, Brauder]

NOTES ON PARISIAN NEWSPAPERS.



ONE of the most characteristic street-cries of London and of New York is never heard in Paris, nor is one of the most picturesque figures in the streets of London and of New York ever seen in the streets of Paris, for in France the noisy and pertinacious newsboy is unknown. The functions of this unstable disseminator of intelligence are filled in Paris by the staid old dame who sits at the receipt of custom in a *kiosque*. A Pa-

risian *kiosque* has nothing oriental but the name. It is a little sentry-box of glass, just large enough to shelter the news-vender from the changeable weather of the French capital. On a little stand in front of the *kiosque* are tiny heaps of the countless newspapers of the city, and on strings on each side are pendent numbers of the chief illustrated journals, artistic and comic. These *kiosques* are scattered along the boulevards, and from them the Parisian buys his "Figaro" in the morning and his "Temps" at five in the afternoon.

This difference of attitude between the hurrying American, who has to have his newspaper brought to him in haste hot from the press, and the leisurely Frenchman, who is content to pick up his paper when he goes abroad—this difference is far more than external; it is essentially typical of the irreconcilable difference between the French journal and the English or American newspaper. For one thing, the French journal is not a *newspaper* in the American sense of the word—and of a truth it does not pretend or desire to be. The "Figaro" now and again makes a ludicrous claim to the ubiquitous omniscience of the London "Times" or "The New York Herald," but this is not to be taken seriously. The fact is, that while the primary quality of a good English or American daily paper is news, the primary quality of a good French paper is not news, but criticism,—criticism of politics in the first place, of course, and in the second, criticism of commerce, of law, of finance, of science, of art, of literature, and of the drama. The aim and ideal of the best French editors is to

present not so much the minor details of a fact, but the best possible opinion on the fact. Of mere brute news, minute particulars of scandals, crimes, and horrors, such as we here in America have dumped upon our breakfast table every morning, with all the accompanying repetition and accumulation of uninteresting fact,—of all this the reader of the Parisian journal sees little or nothing. The childish or unintelligent thirst to know what has happened, regardless of the importance of the event, has not yet been developed in France by the rivalry of scrambling editors; and it may be asserted without fear of contradiction that even if they could have it without cost and without trouble, French editors would refuse to print most of the trivial trash which cumber the columns of even the foremost American papers.

It is not that some Parisian papers do not print trivial trash and trash worse than trivial; the difference is rather in aim, the French editor thinking first of criticism and the American editor only too often thinking of mere news—first, last, and all the time. Yet the leading principle which should govern even in news-gathering is better understood in Paris than in London or New York. This is the principle which has been aptly called the "perspective of news," and by virtue of which a trifling accident in the immediate neighborhood is of more importance than a great calamity a thousand miles away. As Villemessant concisely put it, "A dog run over on the Boulevard des Italiens is of more consequence to the 'Figaro' than an earthquake in Australia." If we substitute for the injured dog a picture exhibited or a new play produced, we have just the things about which the Parisian papers give the most news.

In the eyes of foreigners the "Figaro" is the typical French newspaper, just as the London "Times" is the typical English newspaper and "The New York Herald" the typical American newspaper. Perhaps the "Figaro" is indeed as fairly representative of the French character, or, at least, of certain predominant traits in it, as the "Times" or "The New York Herald" is representative of English or American character. In so far as it is representative, the "Figaro" represents Paris rather than France; and in Paris it represents the boulevards, and not the faubourgs. It is the organ of society and of the stage; it is fashionable and frivolous; and it affects to be royalist and re-

actionary; it delights in scandal; it is mercenary; it is always pert, lively, and amusing; and it has the largest circulation of all the papers in Paris — excepting, of course, the little journals sold for five centimes each. The “Figaro” pretends now to be royalist, just as it pretended under the Empire to be in the liberal opposition; and it let M. Saint Geneste fall foul of the Republic as it once let M. Rochefort rain epigrams on the Empire. At bottom the “Figaro” has no principles — except to sell as many copies as possible. It has skillfully allowed honest and enthusiastic writers to urge their causes in its columns with what heat and strength they might: as their articles were signed, the paper bore no odium for their opinions, while it reaped the benefit of the attention they might attract. Nowadays its political attacks are perfunctory, and but little notice is paid to them by any serious politician. It continues to defend the throne and the altar in the language of the tap-room and the stable; but the circulation of the paper in no wise depends on these empty assaults. It may be that this violent devotion to reactionary faith pleases the old ladies of the conservative party; and certainly the “Figaro” — so Mr. Hamerton tells us — is taken throughout France by the country *curés*.

The real cause of the “Figaro’s” success is the skill with which it reflects the shifting scenes and opinions of the boulevard. A glance at its make-up will show how carefully it has considered the taste of the modern Athenians who idle away their time under the shadow of the opera. It is a four-page paper. On the lower third or fourth of the first and second pages is the *feuilleton*, or daily installment of the serial story which is now to be found in every well-regulated French newspaper. The opening article on the first page is what we should call the chief “editorial” and what the

English term a “leader.” In Paris it is known as a *chronique*, and in the “Figaro” it is always signed by the writer’s name or pseudonym. Here in this post of honor are placed the vehement protests of M. Saint Geneste, of the pompous person who signs himself “Ignotus,” and of the other political polemicists of



A NEWSPAPER KIOSQUE ON THE BOULEVARD.

his kind. Here, in default of a political essay, are placed the social essays of M. Albert Wolff, of M. Bergerat, and of the other lively writers who devote themselves to the manufacture of the glittering and flimsy *article de Paris*. Here the “Figaro” is wont to put the paper it has coaxed from the man of the moment — from M. Émile Zola, for example, whom it engaged, after his quarrel with the “Voltaire,” to contribute a weekly essay on topics chosen by himself. (M. Zola’s volume “Une Cam-

pagne" is a reprint of most of these "Figaro" articles.) Generally the second article is a series of paragraphs, personal and political, put under the title of "Echoes of Paris" and signed "The Iron-Mask." The final paragraphs are jokes, not long and often broad.

vertisements generally begin on the third page and fill the fourth.

Most of the reading-matter on the third page is given up to the theaters, which are probably more amply considered in the "Figaro" than in any other daily paper in the

world — and this is typical of the importance of the theater in France. New plays are criticised at length by the dramatic critic, M. Auguste Vitu, a writer with a wide knowledge of theatrical history. M. Vitu's criticisms are of special value to those who seek to know the probable success of a new play, since he is apt to yield his own judgment somewhat to popular opinion. The musical criticisms were signed "Benedict," which is a pseudonym of M. Jouvin, the son-in-law of Villemessant, the founder of the "Figaro." There is a column of theatrical notes and news, announcements of new plays, anecdotes, puffs, and so forth. There is a list of plays to be acted at the different theaters that night; and during the theatrical season there is an article called the "Soirée Théâtrale," in which a "Monsieur de l'Orchestre," formerly M. Arnold Mortier and now M. Émile Blavet, gossips about the theatrical sensation of the hour, describing the people present at an important "first night," commenting on the



THE OFFICE OF THE "TEMPS."

After these may come a "society" article, a report of the proceedings of the two chambers, a review of the other papers, a summary of the chief cases in the law-courts, an occasional letter from a special or a foreign correspondent, and a column of local news — accidents, fires, murders, and the like. These fill the second page and lap over on the third. The ad-

scenery and the costumes, and inventing humorous conversations between histrionic celebrities. The connection of the "Figaro" with the theater has always been very close. Nearly every one of its writers has written plays, and M. Millaud, the comic poet of the "Figaro," and M. Philippe Gille, the editor of the department of "Paris Echoes," and the

late M. Mortier have all collaborated with M. Henri Meilhac. M. Vitu was the French adapter of Signor Giacometti's "Morte Civile," the painful play in which Salvini acts with so much pathetic effect. M. Jules Prével, the collector of theatrical news, M. Émile Blavet, and M. Albert Wolff are other of the contributors to the "Figaro" who are also contributors to the stage.

It was in 1826 that "Figaro" was first used as the name of a weekly paper, which lived brilliantly for seven years. Many attempts were made to revive it, notably one by M. Alphonse Karr in 1837. But its actual resurrection took place in 1854, when the late M. de Villemessant, with the aid of Auguste Villemot, Edmond About, M. Francisque Sarcey, M. Aurélien Scholl, M. Charles Monselet, M. Théodore de Banville, and other wits as lively, succeeded in making the "Figaro" the most alert and vivacious weekly journal in Paris. In 1866, when the daily "Événement," belonging also to Villemessant, was suppressed, he filled its place instantly by turning the "Figaro" into a daily. Then came the engagement

of M. Henri Rochefort and his rattling fire of small shot against the Empire and the Emperor. Villemessant, leaving the responsibilities of these attacks to the man whose signature



THE OFFICE OF THE "FIGARO."

they bore, artfully counterbalanced them by other signed articles defending the Empire or advocating the Legitimist cause. When M. Rochefort's violence became dangerous to the "Figaro," Villemessant advised him to found a paper of his own, and the result was the "Lanterne," which lighted up the last days of the last Empire.

This is typical of Villemessant's tact in using honest enthusiasm to turn the "Figaro's" grindstone; and the "Figaro" has always an ax to grind. Of the important newspapers of the world, the "Figaro" is the least reputable and the most frankly mercenary. Its columns are for sale to the highest bidder. Its financial review, and with this the right to control every paragraph in the paper bearing in any way on the money market, stocks, investments, etc., are sold openly to the Banque Parisienne for a sum exceeding a quarter of a million francs a year. Puffs of all kinds can be seen on every page: the mingling of advertisements with the more important articles of a newspaper, so that the praise of the advertiser seems to be the expression of editorial opinion, is a prevailing sin of most Parisian journals; but no other paper is quite so shameless as the "Figaro." Even its literary and dramatic departments are tainted. The "Figaro" publishes on Wednesdays and Saturdays a literary supplement, much as the American daily enlarges its Sunday issue; and this supplement, in addition to a letter from London, other odd bits of correspondence, and a few selected articles, contains a review of current literature with abundant quotations from books of the day. Many of these criticisms are the work of friendship; some are purchased. If a publisher wishes a few words of praise in the "Figaro" to precede the quotation of the most striking chapter of a new novel, he finds that there is a regular tariff for this as for any other advertisement. One of the oldest of French dramatists, speaking to me of the "Figaro," said that "it is nothing but a shop"—and such, in fact, it is.

It is, however, an example of successful shop-keeping. Its circulation varies from sixty to eighty thousand copies daily, and its profits from advertisements, both open and concealed, are large. Within a few years it has moved into a house of its own, in the Rue Drouot. In this hotel the "Figaro" now and again gives receptions to visiting notabilities, calling on the leading artists of the leading theaters of Paris to aid in entertaining the wandering monarch or prince after he or she has finished inspecting the power-presses, the business offices, and the editorial rooms. The building is a rather erratic specimen of Parisian architecture. The front is adorned by a bronze statue

of *Figaro*, ordered only after a competition of designs. On the ground-floor of the building is another money-making invention of the "Figaro's"—the *Salle de dépêches*, a hall in which the public can gaze on the latest dispatches, maps of the seat of war wherever it



ALBERT WOLFF.

may now chance to be, sketches, autographs, and caricatures of the celebrities of the moment.

M. Albert Wolff is the typical writer for the "Figaro." His biography, by the friendly hand of M. Toudouze, was given to the world three or four years ago. M. Wolff is called a Parisian of the Parisians, and he thinks himself the absolute quintessence of the boulevards, but by birth he is a German. As a boy in Cologne he met that other typical Parisian, Offenbach, and became possessed of the idea that Paris was the center of the solar system. He made his first appearance in literature with a book of comic travels on the Rhine, illustrated by his own rough wood-cuts. Then he wrote sentimental tales for children. Suddenly he gave up Germany and German for Paris and French. In Paris he had to begin at the bottom; but he had wit and will, and in time he began to be noticed as a writer of flashing brilliancy. He toiled at his trade of acquired cleverness, and he learnt the art of being a Parisian. He collaborated with M. Rochefort in writing a farce or two, and with M. Blum in writing the "Memoirs of Thérèse, by Herself," a book which had a questionable notoriety. By dint of hard labor he made himself a Frenchman, as his fellow-German Grimm, as the Englishman Hamilton, as the Italians Galiani and Fiorentino had done before him. He

is as clever as Fiorentino, and as much feared. He is the art critic of the "Figaro," and he writes its annual report on the Salon. It may suffice to say that although his hostility is dreaded, his praise is not respected—yet of course it has its influence.

The success of the "Figaro" has led to many imitations. The chief of these are the "Gaulois," the "Événement," the "Voltaire," and the "Gil Blas." The "Gaulois" is the oldest and has had the most ups and downs; it has less originality and says ditto to the "Figaro" more persistently than the others. The "Événement" is perhaps the most prosperous of the "Figaro's" immediate rivals; its circulation is more than half as large; its theatrical gossip is as accurate as the "Figaro's" and more aggressive; and in M. Aurélien Scholl it had a writer of chroniques quite as Parisian as M. Wolff and far wittier. M. Scholl writes too much, and the quality of his writing suffers from the quantity, but at his best he is really a wit. He has written countless columns of copy, but lost in this mass are articles of the finest temper and the most perfect point.

I remember hearing M. Sarcey say that there could be collected from M. Scholl's essays a book of two hundred or three hundred pages equal to the best of Chamfort—and Chamfort is the French equivalent for Sheridan or Sydney Smith. Even M. Scholl's average articles are very clever—clever, indeed, as the acting of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, the plays of M. Victorien Sardou, or the architecture of M. Charles Garnier, all very clever Parisians. The "Voltaire" is also prosperous; among its chief writers are M. Ranc, M. Naquet, and M. J. J. Weiss, one of the sharpest and most sarcastic of all French journalists. The "Voltaire" owes much of its circulation to the skill with which its serial stories are chosen. M. Émile Zola was once the dramatic critic of the "Voltaire."

Here occasion serves to note how many distinguished French authors have been engaged as dramatic critics on the daily papers. M. Zola now no longer writes dramatic criticism, as the success of his novels has made him independent. M. Alphonse Daudet was in 1882 the dramatic critic of the "Parlement," and M. Georges Ohnet held the same post on the "Constitutionnel." M. Adolphe Jullien, the erudite author of the "History of Theatrical Costume" and of several studies in the history of music, is the musical critic of the "Français." M. François Coppée, the poet, criticised the acted drama for the "Patrie," and his fellow-poets M. Armand Silvestre and M. Henri de Bornier did the same for the "Estafette" and the "Nouvelle Revue." Three other poets are or until recently have been dramatic critics—M. Théodore de Ban-

ville, M. Jean Richepin, and M. Paul Arène. And while these distinguished writers are dramatic critics just as Théophile Gautier was a dramatic critic, simply because the position is honorable and remunerative,—for a poet must live,—the chief of those who are dramatic critics by vocation because they love their work, M. Francisque Sarcey of the "Temps" and M. Auguste Vitu of the "Figaro," have also done noteworthy work in other branches of literature and journalism.

The "Gil Blas" as a rival of the "Figaro" demands a few words by itself. It was started seven or eight years ago, in the belief that a purely literary daily paper would succeed in Paris. Unfortunately the belief was not founded on fact, as the event proved, and the "Gil Blas" came near foundering. It was in the habit of printing short stories, sketches, and little tales in nearly every number. One day it published a funny story as broad as anything in Boccaccio or Balzac's "Contes Drolatiques." That day the "Gil Blas" sold its whole edition. A few days later another story of the same sort appeared, and was eagerly bought. In a little while the circulation of the "Gil Blas" quadrupled. Again a little while and the paper was seized by the police. It mended its manners and its morals for a time. When next it fell from grace the police seized it again. Having attracted attention, the "Gil Blas" has now moderated its grossness, and is trying to regain its position as a literary journal. M. Guy de Maupassant, M. Théodore de Banville, M. Jean Richepin, M. Armand Silvestre are all clever men, and their writing is often brilliant, but work like theirs in the "Gil Blas"—to use Cowper's words—

"Shines in the dark, but ushered into day
The stench remains, the luster dies away."

The success of lively and entertaining newspapers like the "Figaro" and the "Événement" has greatly cut into the circulation and diminished the influence of the staid and sober papers like the "Journal des Débats." The "Parlement," the organ of M. Dufaure, was recently consolidated with the equally judicial and temperate "Débats." In an article on the Forty Immortals of the French Academy, in the number of THE CENTURY for January, 1884, there was a portrait of M. John Lemoine, the chief writer on the "Débats" and in many respects the foremost of French journalists. Among his fellow-contributors are M. Renan, M. Taine, and M. Cuivillier-Fleury, all of whom are also members of the Academy. It was for the "Débats" that Jules Janin wrote his famous dramatic criticisms, now well-nigh unreadable. The "Constitutionnel" and the "Siècle" are fast fading away. It is said that the

circulation of the "Constitutionnel" is now only two thousand. Edmond About, the novelist, was the founder and manager of the "XIX^e Siècle," and it was to his own paper that he contributed his manly "Romance of an Honest Man." The "XIX^e Siècle" was the organ of the anti-clerical middle class, the Voltairean bourgeois. Its success was assured when it took a bold and patriotic position during the revolutionary usurpations of the 16th of May; after About's death it lost its grip.

"La France" was founded by the late Émile de Girardin, the inventor (in France, at least)

with the "République Française," the paper started in 1871 by Gambetta with the aid of M. Challemel-Lacour, M. Paul Bert, M. Spuller, M. Ranc, and M. de Freycinet. It was his share in the "République Française" which made Gambetta financially independent. In the hands of his friends it is the outspoken advocate of the policy he professed, and its influence on contemporary politics is perhaps larger than that of any other paper in Paris — excepting only the "Temps." Part of this influence is due to the circulation of more than 150,000 achieved by a one-cent tender to the "République Française" — the "Petite République Française," a tiny little sheet, modeled on the "Petit Journal," and advocating with mingled vigor and moderation the same broad views of French politics which are set forth in the parent paper.

Among the more radical journals are the "Justice," the "Rappel," and the "Intransigeant." The "Justice" is the organ of M. Clémenceau. The "Rappel" was the organ of Victor Hugo: it was started just before the fall of the Empire by his two sons, now both dead, and by his chief disciples and personal adherents, M. Paul Meurice and M. Auguste Vacquerie. It beats time for the more advanced democrats. Its chief writer is M. Edouard Lockroy, who married the widow of one of Hugo's sons. The "Rappel" has a literary quality more pronounced than is usual in polemic and political newspapers. It was in the "Rappel" that M. Henri Rochefort, when he was an exile, published the most of his serial stories, at least one of which, "Mlle. Bismark," has been translated in America.

M. Rochefort is one of the most striking figures in contemporary Parisian journalism, and his career is curious in its contrasts. A radical republican of an advanced type, M. Rochefort is by birth the Marquis de Rochefort-Luçay. A free-thinker now of the most aggressive school, one of M. Rochefort's earliest efforts in literature was a poem in honor of the Virgin. Successful beyond expectation in his destructive attacks on the hollow pretensions of the Second Empire, M. Rochefort began as a hack writer of comic copy for the minor papers and as a maker of cheap farces for the minor theaters. It is to be said, however, that M. Rochefort's entrance into politics was almost accidental, and that his bitterest diatribes owe their effect chiefly to his mastery of the methods of comic journalism. In fact, M. Rochefort's transformation from a lively critic of ephemeral fashions into a stinging assailant of the Imperial Government was a slow and gradual evolution, and it took the best of three years (1865-1868) before the change was complete. It was in June, 1868, that he abandoned



ROCHEFORT.

of the cheap newspaper. In his hands the paper was a militant republican organ. Like the "XIX^e Siècle," its opportunity came with the reactionary and insidious intrigues of the 16th of May. The double-leaded and double-shotted articles of M. de Girardin were awaited daily with the utmost interest; the crowds formed in line before the kiosques every afternoon to get early copies of the paper; and its circulation rose at one time to 120,000 copies. But Girardin is dead, "La France" has gone over to the monarchists and the anarchists, and its influence has departed. Under Émile de Girardin "La France" fought side by side



CLÉMENCEAU.

the "Figaro," and issued the first number of his own weekly, the "Lanterne," a little pamphlet of thirty-two pages, clad in a cover of fiery red. Of the first number eighty thousand copies were sold. In the "Lanterne," the flippant chatter of the "Figaro" no longer accompanying it, the girding wit of M. Rochefort had full play, and the Imperial court winced under the satire which made it ridiculous. When the "Lanterne" was forbidden in France, its offices were transferred to Brussels, and the weekly numbers were smuggled into France. A favorite device was to pack them inside plaster busts of the Emperor of the French. In 1869 M. Rochefort was elected to the Assembly, and returning to Paris, founded the "Marseillaise." It was in consequence of articles in the "Marseillaise" that one of its contributors, Victor Noir, called on Prince Pierre Bonaparte and was shot dead by the Prince. Arrested in February, 1870, M. Rochefort was set free in September by the fall of the Empire. In February, 1871, he founded the "Mot d'Ordre," and in September he was condemned to a long

term of imprisonment for his part in the resistance of the Commune of Paris to the Republic of France. Sent in 1873 to New Caledonia, he escaped in 1874, crossed America, paused in London, and settled in Geneva, whence he returned to Paris in July, 1880, when the general amnesty of the communists was proclaimed. Two days after his return he brought out a new daily paper, "L'Intransigeant," which remains the mouthpiece of the extreme Left, impracticable and intractable. "L'Intransigeant" seems, however, to be to the taste of a certain section of Parisians, for its circulation is quite thirty thousand copies—nearly as large as that of the "Temps," which most competent critics would be inclined to call the best paper in Paris. "L'Intransigeant" is M. Rochefort's personal organ; it says what he thinks, and it is read simply to see what he says; its importance is due wholly to M. Rochefort. And so the "Justice" is the personal organ of M. Clémenceau: but M. Clémenceau is taken seriously and M. Rochefort is not. The "République Française" was Gam-

betta's organ, but Gambetta was the center of the strongest and sanest group in French politics, and the "*République Française*," although it has lost a little of its circulation since Gambetta's death, did not depend on any one man, however popular or able. It is a good general newspaper, while "*L'Intransigeant*" of M. Rochefort and the "*Justice*" of M. Clémenceau are organs, no more and no less.

The "*Temps*" and the "*République Française*" are the best representations of the temperate, moderate, and yet vigorous republicanism of France. The "*République Française*" is tainted by a certain aggressive agnosticism, the result of a violent reaction against ultramontane pretensions. The "*Temps*" is Protestant in its leanings. The "*République Française*" is a morning journal, and the "*Temps*" is an afternoon paper: they support the same views, and pay the same attention to foreign affairs. The "*Temps*" is now owned and managed by M. Adrien Hébrard and M. Jacques Hébrard, who are both senators. It has the strongest staff of any Parisian paper. In foreign correspondence, in political information and criticism, in literary and artistic reviewing, and even in the gathering of news, it is the foremost of French newspapers. In its sobriety of tone and dignity of manner it resembles the best English and American dailies. It is in the "*Temps*" that M. Edmond Schérer publishes his critical articles, and M. Schérer is the French critic whose articles on Wordsworth and Goethe served as texts for two of Mr. Matthew Arnold's most interesting essays. M. Schérer is, in a measure, the successor of Sainte-Beuve, but he has not yet Sainte-Beuve's authority. His mind and his manner are drier and have less charm; but none the less is he a chief representative of the higher criticism in France.

Among the other eminent literary contributors is M. Legouvé, the dramatist, who published in the "*Temps*" the most of his admirable notes on reading aloud, an art of which he is past-master. The art critic is M. Paul Mantz, and the musical critic is M. Weber; and, although they may have equals among their fellow-journalists, they have no superiors. The dramatic critic is M. Francisque Sarcey, to whom I shall recur shortly. There is a weekly scientific review by M. Vernier. There is an abundance of foreign correspondence of a very high quality. There is a weekly sketch of country life called "*La Vie à la Campagne*," by M. Georges de Cherville; and there was a weekly chronicle called "*La Vie à Paris*," by M. Jules Claretie. Since the fall of 1885, when M. Claretie was appointed director of the *Théâtre Français*, this article has been contributed by that charming writer, M. Anatole France.

M. Jules Claretie is perhaps best known in America as a novelist. His "*M. le Ministre*" and "*Le Million*" have been translated — or rather mistranslated, for the books were shamefully mangled — for American readers. "M.



CLARETIE.

le Ministre" is an admirable novel; it stands even a comparison with the "*Numa Roumestan*" of his friend M. Alphonse Daudet, which deals with a subject closely akin. As a novelist M. Claretie has had the tact and the insight to borrow from the naturalists just enough of their descriptive methods, without allowing the exhibition of things to overpower the revelation of persons. Besides his novels, M. Claretie has also written plays, at least one of which, the "*Régiment de Champagne*" has been acted in the United States. He is also a historian, and he has made the epoch of the French Revo-

lution wholly his own. He has a wider knowledge of literature and life in England and in Germany than most Frenchmen, having frequently visited both countries. Next to the breadth of his knowledge of men and things, he has indefatigable industry, and the union of these two qualities makes him one of the foremost journalists of France. M. Claretie has a pleasant wit and a sharp eye; his tastes are clean and honorable; and so the best of his chroniques in the "Temps" was sometimes not unlike one of Mr. George William Curtis's always delightful "Easy-Chair" articles, and the worst of them was always an amusing medley of judicious observation and antiquarian research. As M. Claretie's chroniques in the "Temps" were more widely quoted from than any other non-political articles of the Parisian press, it is no wonder that they have found many readers when gathered together into annual volumes. The future historian of manners and customs and fashions and ephemeral fancies will have no more trustworthy source of information than the yearly tomes of M. Claretie's "Vie à Paris." (For the instruction of the inquiring, it may be noted that M. Claretie pronounces his name "Clar-ty.")

The honor of being the most quoted writer on the "Temps" M. Claretie shared with M. Sarcey, whose criticism of the drama of the day fills the ground-floor of the "Temps" every Sunday afternoon. M. Sarcey is a graduate of the Normal School; and M. Taine and About were his classmates there. When they left the school in 1848, M. Taine was first, About third, and M. Sarcey fifth. For ten years M. Sarcey taught; then he gave up teaching and took to journalism under the guidance of his friend About. M. Sarcey has recently written a lively and instructive account of his life at the Normal School and of the constant intellectual fencing in which the brilliant band of scholars indulged. He asserts that he can always tell a graduate of the Normal School by the sincerity of his disputation, and he informs us that the scholars had declared war on two formulas only too frequently heard in debate. One of these is the assertion that the adversary is an ass, and the other impugns his motives, declaring that he is too clever to believe what he says. Whenever, therefore, any of the young debaters lost his temper and sneered at the sincerity of his opponent, the entire body arose as one man and said: "Sir, you are an ass!" And when he protested in vain, the chorus rejoined: "Then you do not believe a word of what you say." The German students have in like manner made war on two other silly formulas, which they term the apple and the spinach argument. The apple argument is the twitting of an opponent with a

change of opinion, and it is so called because an apple when accused of having changed color answered that "it is only bad fruit which remains green"; and the spinach argument is the self-congratulation on the fact that one does not think like the opponent, and it is so called because a lady once declared that she was very glad she did not like spinach, for if she did, she would eat it, and she could not bear it.

The robust sincerity thus learnt in the Normal School M. Sarcey has carried through life. M. Sarcey is honest, earnest, and devoted to his work, whether it be the exposure of an ultramontane trick or the analysis of a new play. He used to roast a priest for breakfast every morning in the "XIX^e Siècle," and he parboils himself every evening in one of the Parisian play-houses, all of which are as innocently free from ventilation as a Turkish bath. M. Sarcey is independent; he has never been willing to join any society or to accept any honors; more than once has he refused the cross of the Legion of Honor. His special characteristics are a robust and broad common sense and an equally broad good humor. As a dramatic critic he has attained to the highest repute; his authority, I venture to believe, is greater than was Jules Janin's—and it is assuredly founded on a firmer base. M. Sarcey has a great many qualifications for a dramatic critic, and he has in abundance the most important of all—he is very fond of the theater. He is fair, he is willing to hear both sides, the temper of his mind is judicial, and it is only when he is absolutely convinced of the guilt of the prisoner that the sword of justice falls; but when it does fall, it falls swiftly and to good purpose. M. Sarcey has sympathy with both the dramatic and the histrionic arts. He has insight into both, and he has logically coördinated a system of principles about them both. He is almost the only dramatic critic I know whose report of a performance gives a sound reason for its success or its failure. He has a habit of going at once to the heart of a play, and in telling the story of a drama he sets forth first of all the essential situation, the vital knot, the salient point where this play differs from all other plays. This is a very rare faculty. M. Vitu, for example, contents himself with a verbatim report of the plot of a play, followed by a criticism of its construction and its characters; but M. Sarcey so sets before you the situation that you are enabled to criticise for yourself and to seize at once on every point of his criticism. M. Sarcey has always refused to allow the collection of his dramatic criticisms, declaring that they are journalism and not literature. The only book about the stage he



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has published is "Comédiens et Comédiennes," a series of biographic criticisms of the leading actors of Paris. A satire of M. Sarcey's on the French fondness for office has been translated in America as "The Miseries of Fo-Hi."

The "Temps," it is to be recorded to its credit, has kept itself free from the financial scandals which disgrace most of the Parisian papers. As a rule a new paper is either started by some stock speculator or its financial columns are sold outright. Even the most of the personal organs of prominent French politi-

cians do not disdain to turn a dishonest penny by the open and unblushing advocacy of all sorts of wild-cat enterprises. Indeed, the more swindling the speculation, the more lucrative is the assistance of the journalist. A French friend told me that he had heard the publisher of a Parisian daily complaining that only sound companies were being launched just then, and that of course there was little or no profit to be made out of sound companies. No puffs of this kind disfigure the "Temps," which is in this, as in most respects, the cleanest and most wholesome of Parisian papers.

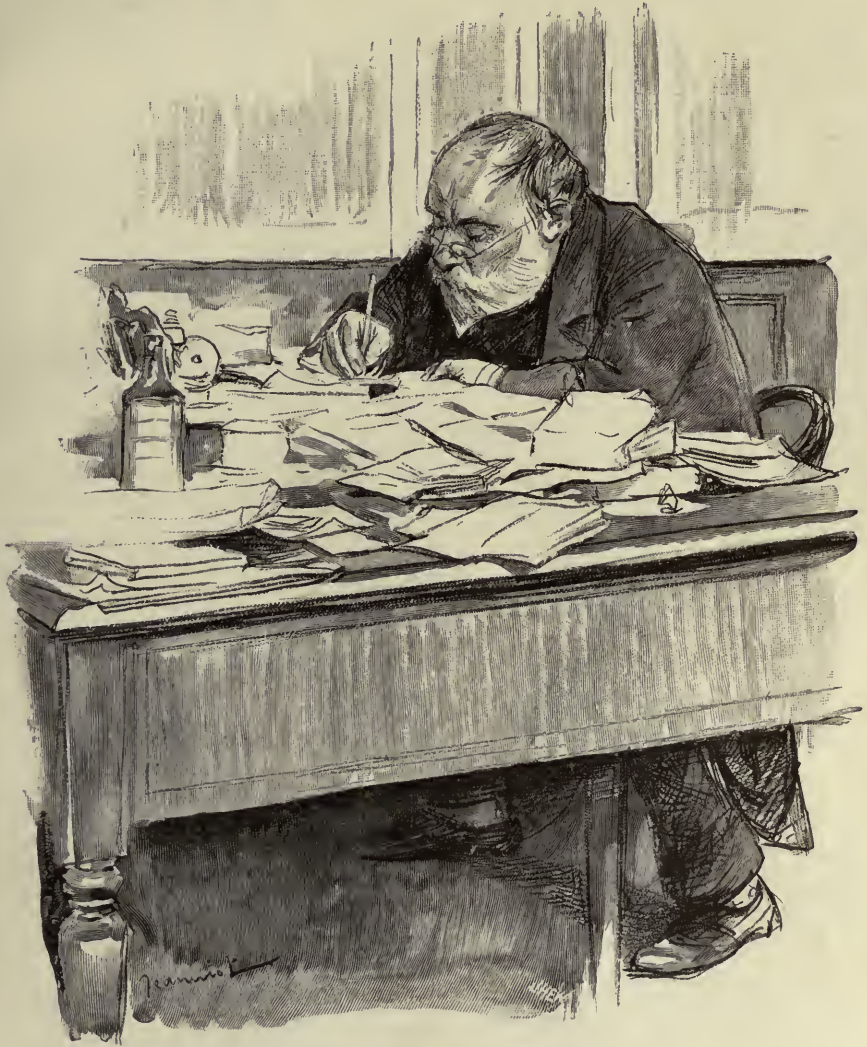
In another respect also is the "Temps" setting a good example—its political articles are anonymous. Under the Empire the law required every article to be signed, that the courts might lay hands at once on an offending writer. The effect of this was undoubtedly to lower the tone of discussion, which tended always to leave the secure ground of argument for the quaking mo-

arrass of personality. Both the "Temps" and the "République Française" let their admirable political articles speak for themselves without the intrusion of the personality of the writer. The purely artistic criticisms—literary, dramatic, or musical—still bear the signatures of the writers.

The most widely circulated daily paper in Paris, and indeed in the world, is the "Petit Journal," which prints daily more than half a million copies. The "Petit Journal" is a tiny little four-page paper, sold for a cent. It contains a daily chronicle, a few items of news, a little correspondence, a little theatrical gossip, nearly a page of advertisements, and installments of two serial stories. To these

serial stories the keeping up of its circulation is due. The announcement of the beginning in its columns of a new novel by one of the writers beloved of its readers suffices sometimes to send up its circulation fifty thousand copies. On the other hand, with an unsatisfactory story its circulation soon drops. To guard against this, proba-

One of the most characteristic of Parisian journals remains to be considered; this is the "Charivari." George Eliot opens her essay on Heine with a quotation from Goethe to the effect that "nothing is more significant of men's characters than what they find laughable"; and in one of her novels she declares that a difference of tastes in jests is a great strain on the



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bly, there are two serials, that one may hit if the other miss. The authors most popular with the readers of the "Petit Journal" have little popularity elsewhere, and their stories, when reprinted as books, have only an insignificant sale. Chief among them are M. Émile Richebourg, M. Xavier de Montépin, and M. Arthur Arnould.

affections. The Parisian of the boulevards is a laughing biped without feathers; his wit is easy and his humor free: he is not like the Scots editor who "jocked w' difficulty"; and his taste in jests can be best discerned in "Charivari." The Frenchman born with a bitter wit created the vaudeville, so the saying goes; and he also created the comic paper.

"Le Charivari"—which was the model of "Punch," as the sub-title of that journal attests to the present day—was founded more than half a century ago by Charles Philipon, the inventor of the historic likeness of Louis Philippe to a pear. The comic journalist is like unto the Irish-American immigrant who when questioned as to his politics asked anxiously, "Have ye a government?—Thin I'm ag'in' it!" "Le Charivari" was against the government of Louis Philippe, so was it against the Republic of 1848, and so would it have been against the Second Empire, if the Imperial censors had not held it bound and muzzled. Forced to turn from the manly satire of politics to the more effeminate satire of fashion and life, "Le Charivari" lost much of its influence and power. The boisterous fun of Cham and the delicate indelicacies of M. Grévin but ill made up for the loss of the rough-and-ready satires of Daumier, often of a vigorous and vitriolic brutality unmatched in the history of caricature. Only too frequently both the text and the illustrations of "Le Charivari" and of its fellow comic papers "Le Journal Amusant" and "Le Petit Journal Pour Rire" bear witness to the French worship of the strange goddess. Only too frequently are they absolutely unfit for publication. M. Taine, in his "Notes on England,"

was specially struck by the total unlikeness of the English comic paper to the French in the subjects it treated and in the decency and cleanliness of the treatment. The English comic paper, like the English novel, is written to be read by the English young lady, while the French comic paper, like the French novel, is more often than not intended only for men, or for women who are willing to look at life as a coarse-grained man views it. Of course it is easy to say that just as the French novel is more artistic than the English,—I do not include the American novel with the English here,—so the French comic paper is comic while the English not unfrequently is comic only in intent; but this is in reality only an aggravation of the offense. There is no sin more heinous than letting the devil have all the fun. It is to be said for "Le Charivari" that it has never speculated in pornography, and that its lapses from what we of the English stock are wont to consider as good morals, if not good taste, are accidental rather than premeditated. It remains to be noted that "Le Charivari" is a four-page daily,—and for many years it was the only illustrated daily paper in the world. Its illustration or illustrations fill the most of the third page: formerly they were lithographic, but they are now produced by one of the many mechanical processes.

Brander Matthews.

Century Dec 1887

THE WINGING HOUR.

"It is better to do the most trifling thing in the world than to consider a half hour a trifle."

GOETHE'S *Sprüche in Prosa*.

STAY not! Pause not!
The noon is near;
The sun hath climbed the height.
Stay not nor fear!
Follow till thy work be done!
On, ever on!

No summer beam shall scorch thee,
Nor sudden wave o'erwhelm thee,
Till thy task be ended.
On, ever on!
Through the mist and through the night,
Through the blinding morning light,
By elements befriended,
Till thy work be done.

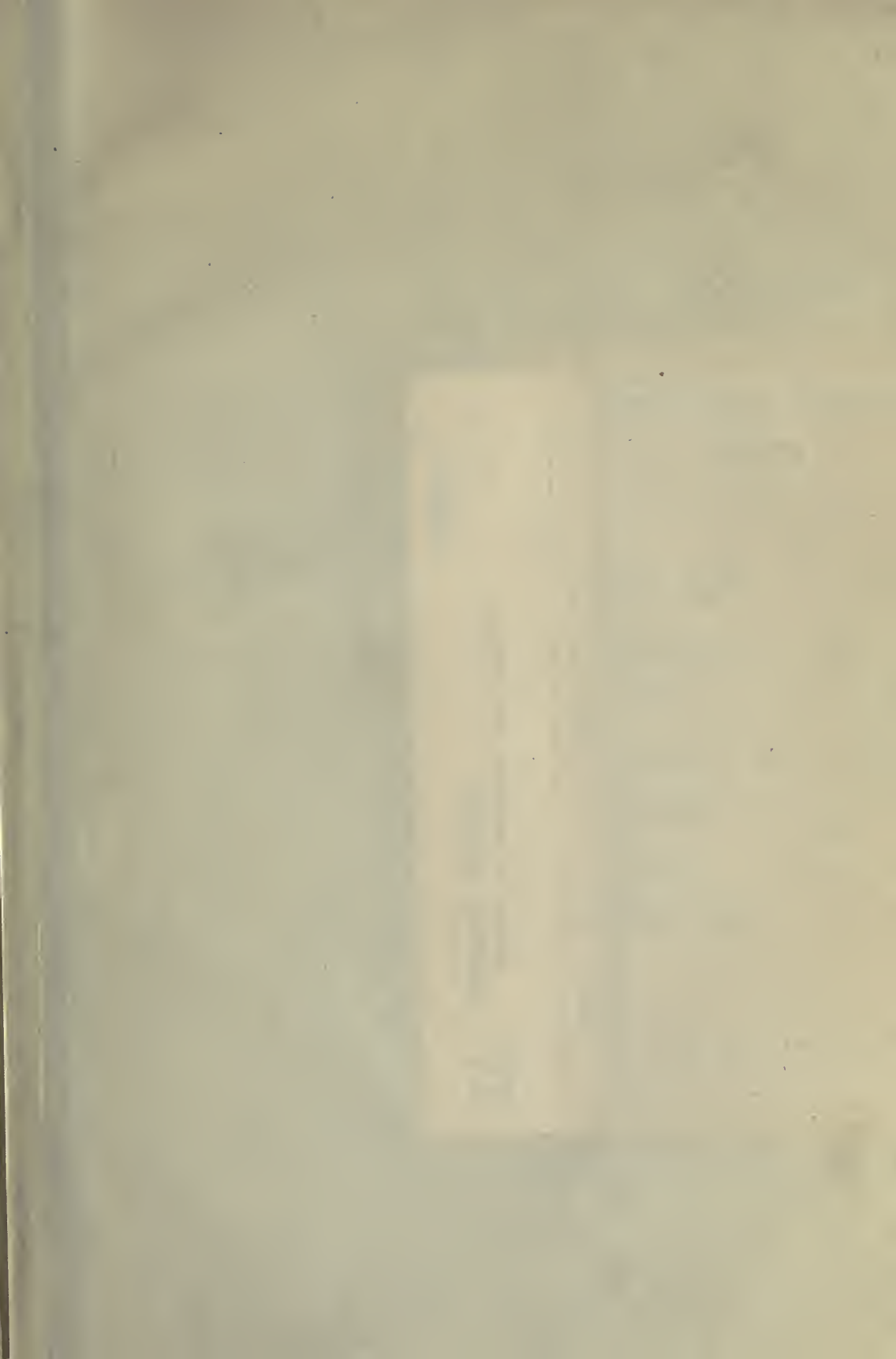
Thou wouldst sail the sea,
The mountain wouldst thou scale,
Upon the starry worlds
Exhaust thy vision frail,

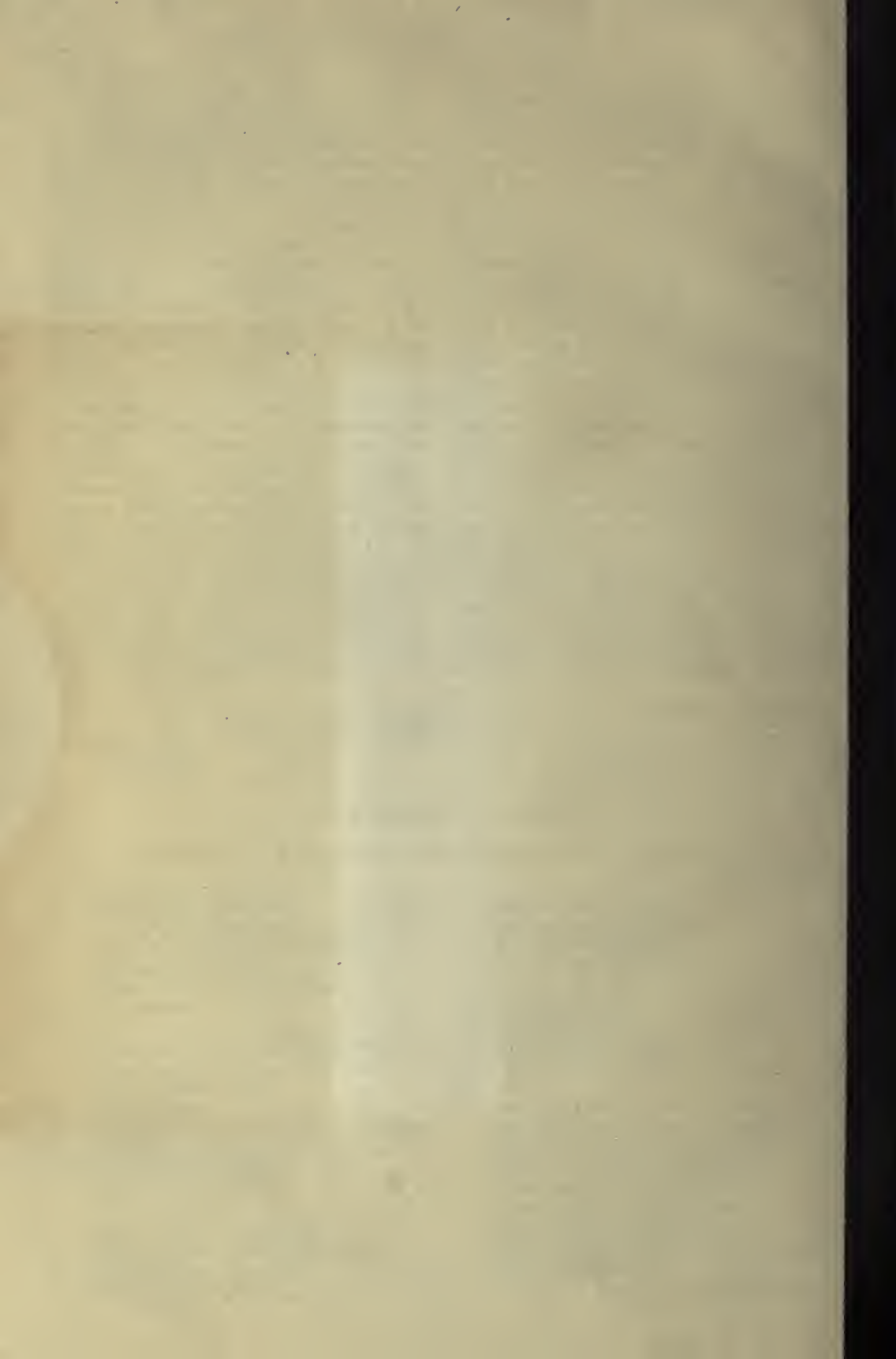
Stay not for the storm
And stay not for the hour,
A greater master yet
Holds thee in his power.

The noon is here,
Thy work undone,
The end draws near
Ere thou hast won.

Conquer Death, for he is weak
And the gathering days are strong!
Time to struggle, time to seek
While the untired moments throng
Close about thee; seize the first!
Then to thee the second turns,
And the third is all thine own;
Thine the light and thine the strength,
Thine the throne!

Annie Fields.





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